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from a bed known to be contaminated or suspected of typhoid.

We have shown also the frequent occurrence, in various shell-fish from the shops, of anaërobic spore-bearing bacilli giving the characteristics of the *B. enteritidis sporogenes* recently described by Klein.

As the result of our work, we make certain recommendations as to the sanitary regulation and registration of the oyster beds, and as to quarantine for oysters imported from abroad.

#### CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

##### ETHNOGRAPHY OF LIBERIA.

IN *L'Anthropologie*, for August, the French Consular Agent at Monrovia, M. Delafosse, gives a sketch of the present ethnography of Liberia. The colored immigrants from the United States, usually with more or less white blood in their veins, have mixed indiscriminately and largely 'de la main gauche' with the native inhabitants. They form a part-colored population, not of a promising character. The indigenous languages belong to four stocks, the Mande, the Kru, the Gola and the Guele, the last mentioned being that of the cannibal tribes on the southeast. The original people of this part of the coast were the Dé, who were related to the Kru tribes and those of the Ivory Coast. The Vei belong to the Mande (or Mandingo) stocks, and are interesting as using a peculiar syllabic alphabet, first observed by Lieutenant Forbes, U. S. N. M. Delafosse says that it was not their invention, as has been stated, but was borrowed by them from some tribe near the source of the Niger.

##### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SKULL-MASKS.

THE use of skulls, or imitations of them, as masks, was not uncommon in America, and is quite frequent in Polynesia. Their symbolism and signification are examined by L. Frobenius in the *Internat. Archiv für Ethnographie* (1898, Heft IV.). Rejecting former and incomplete suggestions, he finds this custom arose from that of the adoration of skulls themselves. It is well known that in primitive religion the skulls of men and animals are conspicuous objects of worship, as representing the spirits of the departed. This was connected with the religious

homage to ancestors, to deceased chieftains and to the brute eponymous forefathers of the totem. Sometimes the symbolism of the skull in the mask was reduced merely to the insertion of teeth or some such single feature.

##### THE SVASTIKA IN AMERICA.

THAT a simple figure, like the Svastika, may arise independently, representing quite different objects, is again illustrated by Mr. Wm. W. Tooker in an article in the *American Antiquarian* for December. Among the marks which were tattooed on the backs of the Virginian Indians as totemic designs we find the Svastika, as Mr. Tooker says, 'in full bloom.' In this instance, from other figures given, the design seems to represent four tomahawks crossed in pairs, the blades in opposite directions. But, as Mr. Tooker remarks, "It is a simple figure which, when compared with others of aboriginal origin, might be evolved from an Indian's brain," without evoking the hypothesis of a foreign immigration. As a 'symbol' it has no constant and universal meaning, and the mystical importance which has been attached to it by some imaginative writers has no foundation in facts.

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#### SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. P. L. SHERMAN, formerly instructor in general chemistry in the University of Michigan, has gone with Professor Worcester to the Philippines as his secretary.

DR. I. BORNMÜLLER has gone to northern Persia on a botanical expedition.

THE Berlin Academy of Sciences has made a grant of 2,400 Marks toward the expenses of a botanical expedition to Java by Dr. Paul Knuth.

THE herbarium of Professor Chodat, of the University of Geneva, has been destroyed by fire.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUEL J. BARROWS, of Massachusetts, will be appointed Librarian of the National Library. This is regarded as an excellent appointment, that will insure the conduct of the Library without reference to politi-